

WILLIAM BLAKE.

A JUDICIOUS MONOGRAPH.

WILLIAM BLAKE: His Life, Character and Work. By Alfred T. Story, Esq., pp. 160. London: Swan, Sonnenschein & C. Co., New-York. Macmillan & Co.

The quickest way in which to inspire confidence is to have confidence in one's self. "My mission is visionary," said William Blake; "an endeavor to bring back the Golden Age." That he was inspired in his mission he never doubted; hence, in great measure, his success in imposing upon others. The extent of his imposition, however—and we use the word in any but its offensive sense—depends upon the mysticism of his reader. Messrs. Ellis and Yeats, whose bulky edition of Blake, accompanied by a memoir and an interpretation, was recently reviewed in The Tribune, were prepared by the nature of their sympathies to unreconcileably accept their author as the poetic prophet of a new era. The principal outcome of their labors with Blake's works was the assertion that he had embodied in the latter a well-known symbolic organism. Mr. Story, who follows the three stately volumes of these editors with a modest little monograph of less than 20 pages, has some of the enthusiasm of his predecessors and some of their faith; but underneath his attitude of admiration we perceive what Messrs. Ellis and Yeats lacked—a strain of common sense. Of their dealings with Blake's symbolism he says candidly that they push it too far, "and make too complex a system of it." Blake, "we feel convinced," he continues, "never evolved all that confused and laborious system; his genius was too intuitive, too instantaneous for that."

As a lover of Blake, Mr. Story is persuaded of the latter's sanity, but he still has the courage to make the following declaration in regard to the "Jerusalem," the work which Blake himself thought his greatest. "South to say, there are whole pages that afford no hint or glimmer of meaning, but roll on like life in waves and billows of sound, as unmeaning as to any sense they may contain as the ocean itself." That frank admission is worth volumes of obscure commentary upon still more obscure poems, and it proves Mr. Story's qualifications to speak of the eccentric artist and poet. It is to the latter that this book is chiefly devoted. In a forthcoming volume Mr. Story proposes to treat of Blake's art. The first half of the present publication traverses the not specially fruitful span of his life, presenting succinctly data already known to students, but not hitherto found in such convenient form. It may be observed in passing that Mr. Story seems disposed to lend credence to the amazing Adam and Eve episode, which has been employed destructively by so many critics of Blake's mentality. The incident was not, he says, "wholly improbable as the act of a person of Blake's known views and temperament." In his survey of the poems Mr. Story's conclusions are that Blake had splendor of imagination, intense spirituality, profusion of thought, and magnificent incoherence of expression. He had "a message," but it was too great for him. "No man in his day and generation—no man, perhaps, that ever stood on our English earth—struggled so hard to deliver the truth that was in him. How high his deliverance was to becoming a mere nullity and abortion we know, and yet it was providentially saved from that tamony. Through the smoke and vapor of his fiery effort, through the roaring and confused thunder of his wrathful spirit, we see the tongue of clear flame ascending—we hear the voice proclaiming. Thus was he enabled in some sort to deliver his message—possibly to deliver it fully—albeit the utterance was accompanied by much tempestuous uproar, and such a wild roar of words, that one is at times almost deafened!" We have quoted thus copiously from Mr. Story because the moderation and good judgment the extracts illustrate are the best and most original characteristic of his book. He adds nothing to our knowledge of Blake, but gives pleasure by the reasonableness of his point of view. It is a step gained in the clarifying of the poet's fame when one who receives him can praise without adulation and criticism without bigotry. There is no better introduction extant to the study of Blake than this unpretentious sketch.

WORK OF AN INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION.

INTERESTING FIGURES GIVEN IN THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AMERICAN COTTON OIL CO.

The third annual report of the American Cotton Oil Company, of which an abstract was published in The Tribune last week, is unique among industrial reports, in that it goes into much detail in describing the operations of the corporation. The report was prepared by Edward D. Adams, chairman of the Board of Directors, and is accompanied by an interesting historical and descriptive account of the cotton oil industry, written by Gustav Kohn.

The liabilities of the company on its capital account were reduced in May last by the purchase and cancellation of \$23,000 of bonds, which leaves the bonded indebtedness at \$35,600.

The common stock capital is placed at \$29,257,100, and the total assets at \$10,300,000, making the total capitalization \$39,557,100.

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